

STORY ESSENTIALS

- Narrative voice – a powerful and consistent storyteller persona appropriate to the material.
- Narrative structure (Plot) -- drama through conflict in reconstructed reality
 - Person with problem
 - Struggle: solve it, avoid it, or come to grips with it the tension heightens as protagonist fails to reach final solution (although may achieve partial resolution) throughout scenes. Connection to audience is based on potency of conflict choice and body-based empathy
 - Climax/Resolution: occurs when person can do no more and succeeds or fails to solve problem. The struggle must have the potential of creating transformation whether the struggle is a success or failure. The transformation may or may not be illuminated --
- Scenes, connected mini-narratives, (solution attempts fail, and heighten overall tension while releasing short term tension)
 - Scenes must always contribute to the central story.
 - Scenes should do what the story does in miniature (problem, struggle, resolution)
 - Scenes should have functions within the central story: ie advance plot, develop character, describe setting, create or enhance a mood or effect, etc.
- Character - Important to rich story -- voiced, embodied
- Setting - vivid, sensual
- Tools
 - action
 - narration (telling about what happened rather than showing with action)
 - point of view
 - dialogue
 - description
- The problem of fidelity to the world of factual data versus the world of truth.

BALLAD CONSIDERATIONS

- Ballads are super compressed. Every word must accomplish contribute to
 - Characterize or clarify the situation
 - Move plot
 - Develop character
 - Establish a vivid setting
- Storytellers/Balladeers use a rhythm of building/releasing tension to heighten conflict
- Successful Stories/Ballads must meet the performance expectations aroused by
 - The Title
 - Engaging conflicts
 - Potent Images, settings
- Climax comes when character can, or will, do no more.

HUMOR

Humor of Angels and Devils -- funny stuff: death, injury and mutilation, injustice, pain, stupidity, despair, racism, sexism, ethnic chauvinism, hate, arrogance, human folly especially religion, medicine and politics.
Belly laugh: savage release of almost unbearable tension

In structure

- romance (the touching struggles of people who love or will love one another).
- education (dumb person learns)
- Picaresque quest (dimwit or rogue on a journey of self-discovery).
- Formal satire (let's make fun of opera, the romance novel, or art rock)

Uses for humor in writing

- building Characters (what do they do that's funny, what do they laugh at)
- humanizing Heroes/Villains
- making the reader feel comfortable and safe
- tension release

Techniques for creating humor

- create situation where characters are ignorant or mistaken about facts known to the reader.
- unexpected and inappropriate behavior
- purposeful misinterpretation generally by over literal interpretation
- earnest description of base acts
- portraying a ludicrous situation as though it were evocative or poignant
- purposeful distortion of a "sacred" myth, story or tradition -- often through being very literal
- portrayal of unrecognized foolishness
- exaggeration
- improper attributions of purpose
- irony, reversed meaning
- understatement and/or stating the obvious
- manipulation of dialects and colorful figures of speech
- paradoxical effect
- unexpected juxtapositions
- predictable vignettes or moral tales that characters interpret in unexpected ways
- demonstration of character flaws

ZEN OF CRITIQUING OR CRITIQUING MIND

As a peer reader your task to be a servant to the unfolding of stories and all the technical and psychological needs of true stories. For our purposes, this involves the struggle to connect to the audience only secondarily. The needs and desires of the audience are ephemeral and subject to whim, fashion, power manipulation, etc.

- leave your values at the door (you may not be in the writer's audience).
- accept the writer's criterion.
- have the discipline to accept that a piece that you loathe, find despicable or trivial may be brilliant and effective
- likewise note that a piece that champions values you hold dear can be dull, leaden, and ineffective.
- Divorce yourself from personal considerations.
- Ignore your attraction or repulsion to the writer.
- Leave ego needs behind. This is not to make you feel smart or clever.
- Notice what works or what doesn't. Intrigue, credibility, empathy, sensuality, emotional connection, the things that keep you reading or hinder the process.
- Look for one thing at a time. Structure, character, point of view, voice, dialogue, description, narration, pacing, action sequencing.